

## **New Mexico's Forest and Watershed Health Plan: Guiding Principles**

These Guiding Principles form a basis for how ecological restoration efforts should take place in New Mexico. They describe a common understanding of the way to address important ecological principles, socio-cultural concepts and economic issues. The integration of these three pillars toward restoration and long-term stewardship of the natural landscape is at the heart of the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Health Plan.

**ECOLOGICAL: Promoting ecological integrity, natural processes, and long-term resiliency is the primary goal of the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Health Plan.**

### **Landscape Approach**

Landscape integrity and sustainability are achieved by working at multiple scales. Ecological restoration efforts will be managed using a landscape approach in order to encompass the full range of natural processes and interactions between ecosystems. Ecosystems will be restored to health by addressing the interconnectedness of the landscape across scales and by including the full diversity of biological and physical components.

### **Ecological Capacity**

Statewide ecological restoration and maintenance efforts will be consistent with the region's inherent natural character, i.e., disturbance regimes, the mineral and water cycles, energy flow and ecosystem dynamics that characterize ecological processes and that support diverse native plant and wildlife populations and habitat. Restoration will take into account the overall condition of ecosystems, including vegetation diversity and structure; water quality and quantity; soil stability; and wildlife diversity and habitat.

### **Adaptive Management**

Current ecological conditions demand immediate and proactive action, yet the magnitude and complexity of the challenge will require a sustained effort and diverse practices over a period of decades. Best available science will be used as the basis for this effort, and as improved science develops, practices will be updated. Statewide ecological restoration and maintenance efforts will be evaluated on an on-going basis to ensure effectiveness.

**SOCIO-CULTURAL: The values of New Mexico's diverse human communities will be supported and sustained by ecological restoration.**

### **Collaboration**

The responsibility for achieving and maintaining ecological health is shared among all land ownerships within a given community, whether they be state, federal, tribal, municipal, or private. While the roles and needs of private land owners, government land managers, and stakeholders are distinct, broadly inclusive collaboration will ensure that the best possible solutions are being developed and put into practice.

### **Respect for Diverse Social and Cultural Values**

The relationship between communities and the land is embodied in the social and cultural values and traditions of New Mexico, including the Land Grant and Acequia systems, Tribal and Pueblo traditional uses, agricultural uses, and other long-established as well as more recent land use practices. The collaborative process will respect these diverse values and practices, while considering the natural character of the landscape so as to achieve and maintain healthy functioning of the ecosystem for future generations.

### **Communication and Education**

The current level of awareness and understanding of ecological principles by the general citizenry, policy makers, and stakeholder groups creates the public will to affect ecological health. Communication and education will be integral and constant parts of the process.

**ECONOMIC: Economic productivity is dependent on healthy ecosystems, and will be leveraged to full advantage in support of long-term ecological health.**

### **Natural Resource Use and Capacity**

Economic benefit flows from a healthy ecosystem. The inherent natural character of the landscape and its ecological functionality will guide the use of natural resources.

### **The Role of the Private Sector**

The roles of private land and the private sector are integral to New Mexico's ecological restoration effort. Public/private partnerships in restoration work and utilization of forest and watershed resources will be required to make restoration possible at the scale needed to achieve ecological health.

### **Local Economies**

New Mexico's rural and urban communities rely upon amenity-based, product-based, and agricultural economies. These economies will be strengthened by sustainable local businesses related to ecological restoration and long-term maintenance activities.